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IRANIAN ARMS DEALER WAS DOUBLE AGENT

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THE Iranian middleman in the Reagan Administration's secret arms deals was actually a double-agent working for radicals loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini.

Testimony by former national security adviser Robert McFarlane, CIA Director William Casey and others reveals that Khomeini and his close advisors knew of the top-secret U.S. overtures but chose to play along with the scheme in order to get sorely-needed arms.

These officials also testified that the arms, supposed to go to moderates in the Iranian military, never reached their destination.

Instead, they wound up in the hands of the fanatical Revolutionary Guard loyal to Khomeini and his hand-picked successors.

Intelligence sources say Khomeini loyalists got detailed knowledge of the arms transfers from Manucher Ghorbanifar, the Iranian arms merchant profiled on ABC's "20/20" show as the instigator of the entire Iranian operation.

For more than a year, his true role went undetected despite intensive background checks by the CIA and Israeli security services.

Before the 1979 fundamentalist revolution, Ghorbanifar worked for both the Israeli Mossad and SAVAK, the former Shah's Israeli-trained secret police.

Soon after the revolution, however, he became involved in a plot by Iranian air force officers and former SAVAK agents to overthrow Khomeini.

The plot failed and Ghorbanifar was arrested.

In return for free passage out of the country, he agreed to inform on the air

force officers — 160 of whom were executed.

Several of Ghorbanifar's relatives who remained behind were threatened by Iranian security agents.

Intelligence sources said there is ample evidence he remained an active informant for the new Iranian security force — SAVAMA — throughout the arms deals.

After first proposing the trade of hostages in Lebanon for arms in May 1985, Ghorbanifar is believed to have tipped off the Iranian security service when U.S. shipments of TOW and HAWK missiles arrived in Tehran last year.

McFarlane has testified that he became suspicious of Ghorbanifar last December when he failed to deliver on earlier promises to



ROBERT MCFARLAND
He's suspicious.

tion with Ibrahim Yazdi, a close associate of Iranian parliament speaker Hashemi Rafsanjani, leader of the moderates.

Yazdi, who worked for the CIA for years, met in Washington with McFarlane and North and arranged for their visit to Tehran last May, sources said.

IRANSCAM is not the only time the White House has turned to trusted former Pentagon and intelligence officers and millionaire businessmen to accomplish sensitive foreign policy assignments.

Just last month, the White House sent former CIA Deputy Director Ray Cline and retired Gen. Robert Schweitzer to the Philli-

pinas to save President Corazon Aquino from a possible coup.

The CIA had learned that arms shipments were being sent to officials loyal to former Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and there was ample evidence that he was behind an effort to depose the new Philippine leader.

Cline and Schweitzer, sources said, met with Enrile and presented him with evidence the CIA had received, warning that U.S. aid to the Philippines would halt if Aquino were deposed.

The reason private officials were used — the White House wanted to avoid any appearance that the administration was interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation.

Just two months earlier, President Reagan leaned heavily on millionaire industrialist Armand Hammer to carry "backchannel" messages to the Kremlin during the sensitive negotiations which led to the freedom of journalist Nicholas Daniloff and establishment of the Reykjavik summit.

Reagan is not the first president to get involved with what some cynics are calling the "privatization" or "subcontracting" of U.S. foreign policy.

But he has turned to the private sector far more frequently than his predecessors.

Ghorbanifar managed to slip through the CIA net

secure the release of all six American hostages.

At the time, he recommended that Ghorbanifar be dropped.

The White House agreed with his recommendation and later pursued a connec-